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Editor Introduction

Editor's Introduction

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In this general issue of *The Southern Quarterly*, we explore a variety of concerns central to the current Southern Studies, from Confederate monuments to the tangential treatment of Appalachia to Hollywood adaptations of Southern novels. We also include a new interview with poet Ada Limón, poetry from Henry Hart and Mary Jane White, prose from William Dunlap, a photo essay by Don Norris, and two book reviews.

Many Southern states are still wrangling with the issue of what to do with the Confederate monuments in their public spaces, including those on state-funded college campuses. Removal of some monuments reached a zenith two years ago when the "Unite the Right" white nationalist rally at the Robert E. Lee monument in Charlottesville, VA, so electrified the nation. Three months prior, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu had removed the monument from Lee Circle, as well as three others, asserting that "I want to gently peel people's hands off of a false narrative of history," since the monuments "were designed not to honor the men, not to honor Robert E. Lee, P.G.T. Beauregard, Jefferson Davis. They were put up to send a message [of] who were still in control, notwithstanding the fact the Confederacy lost the war. Now that's intimidating, and the consequence of that was that people who didn't feel comfortable here left" (as qtd. in Jonathan Capehart's opinion piece in *The Washington Post* 5/23/17). Similar efforts followed in Lexington, Nashville, Memphis, Atlanta, Gainesville, and elsewhere. Other memorials were pulled down by protesters, like the statue in front of the Old Courthouse in Durham, NC, which had been erected in 1907 by the Daughters of the Confederacy. After its removal, one bystander was quoted as saying "All those years, black people had to go to court, walk past this sign, and think you were going to get justice?" (qtd. in David A. Graham's article in *The Atlantic* 8/15/17).

Other cities, like Richmond, VA, whose Monument Avenue features sev-

eral Confederate statues on its center median, have thus far resisted removal. Although Richmond native and celebrated tennis player Arthur Ashe's statue stands alongside those of J.E.B. Stuart, Robert E. Lee, and Jefferson Davis, another statue has recently been erected directly challenging the legacy of white supremacy. Kehinde Wiley's bronze *Rumors of War* was unveiled in December of 2019, two blocks away from those other monuments, on the grounds of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The statue, created in a style like those celebrating Confederate generals, shows a modern African American man wearing a hoodie, jeans, and sneakers astride a rearing horse. In a ceremony attended by Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney and Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, Northam observed that the statue's dedication coincides with the 400th anniversary of the start of the Atlantic slave trade in 1619 and stated, "today we say welcome to a more progressive and inclusive Virginia" (as qtd. in Gregory S. Schneider's article in *The Washington Post* 12/10/19).

Rumors of War. Photo by Tyler Walter and taken on December 22, 2019. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 4.0 License.

As a graduate of the University of Mississippi, I have some personal skin in this game: for those unfamiliar, Ole Miss has long celebrated icons of the Confederacy. From the nickname "Ole Miss" to the apocryphal legend that the campus itself was based on a plantation—the Lyceum a stand-in for the Big House—to its former mascot Colonel Rebel and the mini-Confederate flags waved at football games, the University of Mississippi is ground zero for the debate about Confederate iconography and the public university. Change has been slow: under former Chancellor Robert Khayat, the flag-waving was banned and Colonel Rebel retired; under former Chancellor Dan Jones, the Rebels-cum-Black Bears became unofficially known as Landsharks. Neither tried to remove the statue of the Confederate soldier standing sentry on the Lyceum Circle.

In Jay Watson's excellent essay which opens this issue of *The Southern Quarterly*, recent university efforts concerning that statue, as well as other remnants of the Confederacy and subsequent segregation, are detailed. As a member of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on History and Context appointed by former Chancellor Jeffrey S. Vitter (to continue a trend), Watson was charged with determining which areas on campus needed "historical

contextualizing" in the form of explanatory plaques. The committee's archival research complicated their task: in addition to seeing the renaming of one building and the complement of plaques at six campus sites, Watson and his colleagues discerned the need for much more "memory-work" to be done, including addressing Indian Removal and enlisting a full-time university historian. Following the submission of this essay, Ole Miss has announced its intention to place the Confederate statue in the Confederate Cemetery, which is on the edge of campus just beyond the Tad Smith Coliseum. However, the statue's relocation has been delayed by the Mississippi Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL), in part due to the resistance of members of the state legislature.

The cultural shifts taking place on the University of Mississippi campus that Watson describes are echoed in the work of Appalachian poet Don West. As James H. Watkins compellingly argues in our next essay "'Plain Talk': Autobiographical Authority and the Living Word in Don West's *Clods of Southern Earth*," "a focus on the living word in West's poetry offers new insights into the manner in which the spoken word qualities of his verse combine with his performance of an autobiographical identity to create an imagined utopian community in which social justice and racial tolerance are purportedly rooted in Appalachian cultural heritage." Watkins asserts that West's poetry connects him with other Appalachian authors supportive of the Popular Front in the 1930s and 40s, and calls for West's poetry to be taught more frequently in the classroom.

Scholars of Southern Studies have been grappling with the problem of what to do with Appalachia for quite some time. Some have considered the subregion unique because of its geographical isolation, economies rooted in mining towns and mountaintop removal, and ethnic anomalies (e.g., the Melungeons). In 1977, Henry D. Shapiro wrote "In the last decade…we have rediscovered Appalachia...[and have]…defined Appalachia as a land of persistent poverty" (43)—and therefore as separate from the rest of the prosperous US. More recently, in her *Unwhite: Appalachia, Race, and Film* (2018), Meredith McCarroll states that a "strong and often unconscious need to have an *other* has carved out a hollow in which a large and diverse region seems to fit—at least in the minds of the public" (81). In arguing for a more nuanced view of Appalachia which considers its wider economic, cultural, and ethnic diversity, these scholars echo Watkins's analysis of West as poet, progressive, and promoter of the Danish folk school movement.

Just as we need to acknowledge the complexity of the Appalachian subregion, so too should we expect more in filmic adaptations of Southern texts. Margaret D. Bauer's "'Man wonders but [Babs] decides / When to kill the Prince of Tides': Taking the Prince Out of *The Prince of Tides*" analyzes

the ways in which Streisand's 1991 movie of Pat Conroy's bestselling novel fall short. Primarily, Bauer takes issue with how the film elides the character of Luke Wingo, the novel's "Prince of Tides." In shifting the appellation to narrator Tom Wingo, and refocusing the film from his South Carolina childhood to his love affair with Dr. Susan Lowenstein (his twin sister Savannah's psychiatrist, played by Streisand) in New York, Bauer argues that both the characters and the setting are profoundly compromised. However, Bauer does assert that Streisand as director should have been recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the film: just not on its accuracy as an adaptation.

Critics of the representation of the South in mass culture, especially film, have consistently reiterated Bauer's argument. From Jack Kirby's *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination* (1978), Edward D.C. Campbell's *The Celluloid South: Hollywood and the Southern Myth* (1981), and Warren French's *The South and Film*[1] (1981) to Allison Graham's *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle* (2001), Andrew B. Leiter's *Southerners on Film: Essays on Hollywood Portrayals since the 1970s* (2011), and Deborah Barker and Kathryn McKee's *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary* (2011), scholars of the South in film observe the desire of moviemakers to simplify cinematic portrayals of the South. More often than not, that simplification reifies existing stereotypes and therefore reflects Scott Romine's description of the kind of fetishized "narrative fake" (26) he sees in the simulacrum of Tara.

Next in this general issue, we are particularly proud to offer an interview with the poet Ada Limón. The author of five poetry collections, including her most recent *The Carrying* (2018), Limón spoke with Center for Writers doctoral candidate Jon Riccio about technical exactitude, the themes of survival and surrender, and her admiration of the artist Dario Robleto. A West-Coast native currently living in Kentucky, Limón reflected on her new Southern home:

> The South is a very interesting and complicated location to call home. I live in Lexington, KY, where there are horses everywhere. The small rolling hills dotted with horses. Being from California and having lived in New York City for so long, I struggled with "the South" as a concept. But I have come to love Kentucky. There's a beauty and an ease, a peace there that I haven't quite found in other places. The biggest thing living in Kentucky has given me is the silence, a place to shake loose the binds of rush and ego. There's a pace there

that allows me to meander, to think, to stare out the window.
I will forever be grateful to what the Bluegrass has given me,
a sense of quietude and inner hush.

Celebrated as dreamlike and intensely personal, her poetry has been selected as a finalist for the National Book Award (*Bright Dead Things*, 2015) and the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award (*The Carrying*, 2018).

Two new poems follow this interview: "Rivalry" by Mary Jane White and "After the Hurricane" by Henry Hart. Both White and Hart have authored several poetry collections and we are delighted to be able to feature their work here. We are happy to offer a prose selection from William Dunlap, a celebrated artist and writer currently working on our upcoming special issue on Southern Expatriates. Bill's paintings, representing what he calls Hypothetical Realism, have been exhibited internationally and presented in numerous collections, including the National Gallery of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. His recent literary collection, *Short Mean Fiction*, was published in 2016. We are also quite pleased to include several of Don Norris's photographs collected in the photo essay "Southern Vernacular." A documentary photographer and emeritus professor of biology, Norris held an exhibition this year at the Gammill Gallery at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi entitled *Deep South: Particular Places*. His photographs are part of several permanent collections, including those of the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, Auburn's Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans.

Finally, we offer reviews of two historical monographs: John Hayes's *Hard, Hard Religion: Interracial Faith in the Poor South* (U of North Carolina P, 2017) and Allen C. Guelzo's *Reconstruction: A Concise History* (Oxford UP, 2018). Our reviewers are current English graduate students at the University of Southern Mississippi, and we would like to offer the opportunity to review books for the journal to any and all interested parties. Indicate your interest by emailing SouthernQuarterly@gmail.com and we will discuss titles and deadlines!

NOTES

[1] French's essay collection first appeared in a special issue of *The Southern Quarterly* 19.3-4 (Spring-Summer 1981).

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